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The President's Daily Brief

June 11, 1976

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June 11, 1976

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LEBANON: Syrian forces are continuing an armor and infantry assault begun last night against a Palestinian position on the outskirts of Beirut, according to press reports. Prior to the assault, fighting yesterday had been at a relatively low level.

Some clashes between Syrian and leftist forces were reported in Sidon, but little military activity was noted in Beirut and Tripoli. Military authorities in Tel Aviv have reported that a mechanized brigade of the Syrian 7th Infantry Division has entered Lebanon and is moving toward Sidon. Support vehicles of the division were seen entering Lebanon yesterday by the US defense attache in Syria. This is the first firm indication that Syria has begun to draw directly upon its forces confronting Israel on the Golan Heights.

The introduction of the new unit brings the total number of regular Syrian troops in Lebanon to some 12,000, with another 5,000 or so in support roles in adjacent border areas.

Heavy fighting, desertions, and poor morale are taking their toll on Syrian-controlled Palestinian forces in Lebanon, and Damascus has been forced to pull some of them back to Syria. The Syrians will have to replace these troops with some of their own in order to fill the void.

Iraq now has a task force of about 13,000 men in western Iraq.

An armored division, reinforced by units from at least two other divisions, is in position along the Euphrates River between the capital and the Syrian border. It is not clear whether the task force was formed specifically as a contingency for intervention in Lebanon, or whether it has been scheduled to participate in maneuvers in the border area.

Syrian President Asad has acknowledged that he does not know whether

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the Iraqi build-up is intended as a threat to Syria or as a peacekeeping force for use in Lebanon. Foreign Minister Khaddam yesterday informed Arab ambassadors in Damascus that Syria will take "suitable measures" to counter any Iraqi troop movements.

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Jordan also is showing increasing concern about the possibility that the Iraqi forces may try to enter Syria without permission, ostensibly as part of the pan-Arab peacekeeping force for Lebanon.

King Husayn told the US ambassador in Amman Wednesday that he has been in close contact with Asad, and that he has sent a high-level military delegation to Damascus to coordinate contingency plans for Jordanian assistance if Iraq attacks Syria.

Asad told the delegation, which included Prime Minister Rifai, that Syria is moving its troops to counter the Iraqi threat. Both Asad and the Jordanians apparently are also worried that Israel will try to take advantage of Asad's current problems with Lebanon and Iraq.

Jordanian aircraft have begun reconnaissance flights over western Iraq, but, as of last night, were unable to detect any Iraqi troop movements.

Libyan Prime Minister Jallud continued his efforts yesterday to work out acceptable terms for a cease-fire in Beirut. After conferring in Beirut with Palestinian and leftist leaders, Jallud reportedly returned to Damascus for further discussions with Asad.

On Wednesday, Fatah officials reportedly rejected a Syrian proposal,

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conveyed by Jallud, for a cease-fire in place. The Palestinians and leftists are said to be insisting on an immediate Syrian pull-back.

Arab League Secretary General Riyad also visited Damascus yesterday to make preliminary arrangements for the introduction of the six-party Arab security force into Lebanon. After talks with President Asad, Riyad announced that an Arab League military mission will proceed to Damascus within the next two days for detailed talks with Syrian officials.

The mission presumably will be led by Egyptian Chief of Staff Fahmi, who is Riyad's assistant for military affairs. Riyad yesterday instructed Fahmi to begin forming the Arab force.

Actions taken by Riyad and Fahmi are likely to reflect the wishes of Egyptian President Sadat, who, to counter Syria's involvement in Lebanon, probably will push for the early commitment of a substantial force. This will be opposed by Damascus. Asad has agreed to accept a symbolic force, but will try to prevent the Arab unit from replacing or interfering with Syrian forces already in Lebanon.

Asad preempted the Arab League by arranging before its session on Tuesday for a Libyan-Algerian force to proceed immediately to Syria. According to press reports, some Libyan and Algerian troops may have already moved from Syria into Lebanon.

The conservative Arab states and Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasir Arafat apparently decided that their best strategy was simply to add other Arab countries to the Algerian-Libyan team.

Lebanese President Franjiyah, who recently has been cooperating closely with Damascus, has denounced the Arab League resolutions, and leaders of the major Christian militias apparently are following his lead. President-elect Sarkis, who is more immediately responsive to Damascus, has said nothing.

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Israeli defense and Foreign Ministry officials denied reports yesterday that the Rabin government was revising its hands-off policy toward Lebanon.

Syrian spokesmen have insisted publicly that Lebanese approval is necessary before any joint Arab force can be used.

According to one press report, government sources have indicated that Israel could accept a "symbolic" Arab peacekeeping force in Lebanon provided, as usual, that it does not threaten Israel's security.

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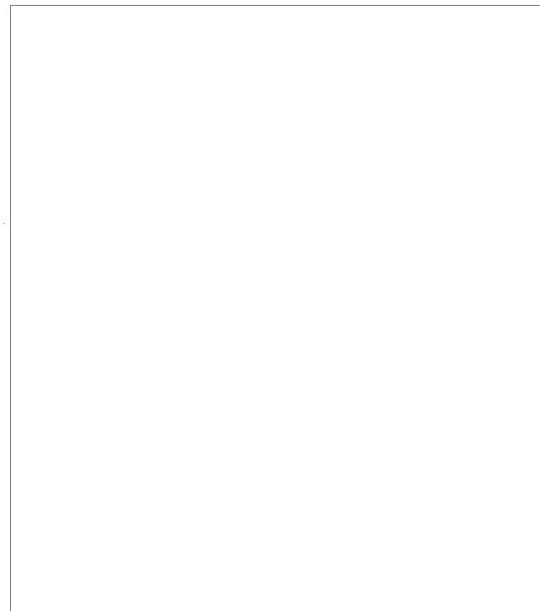
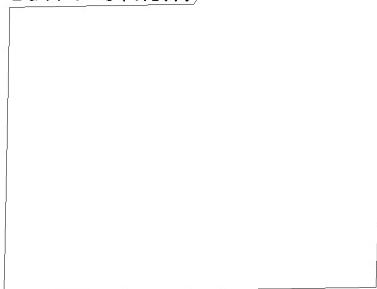
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EGYPT-SYRIA:



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ITALY: Election debate is centering on the Christian Democrats' record in government, the Communist Party's future role, and the sharp increase in politically motivated violence.

With ten days to go until the election, the Christian Democrats are under attack from all sides. The Communists are coupling their demand for participation in the government with the charge that Italy's problems stem from 30 years of

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"bad government." Rather than defending their record, the Christian Democrats have responded by emphasizing the uncertainties that would accompany Communist entry into the government. They seem to have set aside their differences in an all-out effort to remain Italy's largest party.

Despite the Communists' rhetorical insistence that no effective government can be formed without them, there are some signs that the party will not press the issue immediately unless it achieves massive gains.

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[redacted]
for tactical reasons the Communists would prefer to stay out of the government at least until after the US and West German elections.

Berlinguer reportedly is open to a deal by which the Communists would merely support a new government on specific programs--an idea pushed by the Socialists and favored by some Christian Democrats.

Meanwhile, the assassination in Genoa this week of the city's public prosecutor, presumably by left-wing extremists, ensures that political violence will remain a hot issue. The director of Italy's principal public opinion organization has concluded from his research that this issue now favors the Communists, a finding consistent with other evidence that some in the middle class see the Communists as better guarantors of public order.

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USSR: For the first time in the force reduction negotiations, the Soviets have provided some data on the strength of the Warsaw Pact forces.

Their information appears to be incomplete. Moreover, the figures were presented even though agreement had not been reached on which categories of forces should be

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counted and on how ground and air force manpower in the Warsaw Pact and NATO should be defined.

The Soviet ambassador to the negotiations stated yesterday at a formal plenary session that the overall strength of the Warsaw Pact force in the NATO Guidelines Area, which includes East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, is 987,300 men. He also said that this total included 805,000 men in the ground forces--a figure that is 144,000 lower than the NATO estimate.

In deriving their lower figures, the Soviets apparently have counted the manning of Soviet units at less than the strength level that NATO claims they have. They also have excluded non-combat uniformed support personnel, which are included in the Western figures. In addition, they have defined ground and air force units by function rather than by service designation.

According to NATO estimates, the Pact's ground forces in the NATO Guidelines Area have about 160,000 more troops than does NATO. Although the Soviets have not yet presented their estimate of NATO strength, it is likely that their data will show a smaller disparity between Warsaw Pact and NATO ground forces than do Western figures.

BALANCE OF FORCES IN THE MBFR NEGOTIATIONS

	NATO Force Strength (NATO estimate)	WARSAW PACT Force Strength	
		(Soviet statement)	(NATO estimate)
Ground Forces	791,000	805,000	949,000
Air Forces	193,500	182,300*	198,000
Total Forces	984,500	987,300	1,147,000

*This figure was not provided by the Soviets. It was derived by subtracting their ground force figure from their overall force strength.

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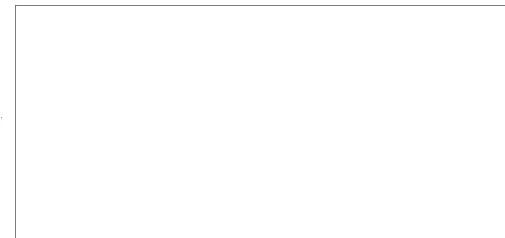
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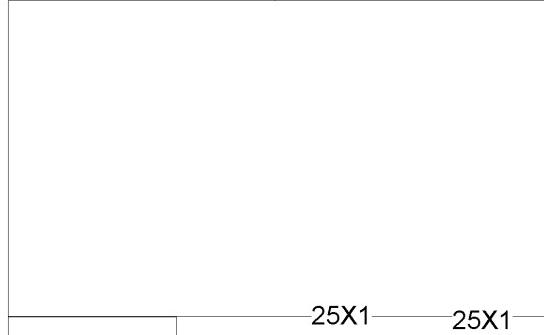
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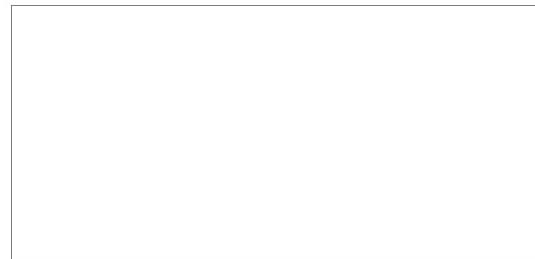


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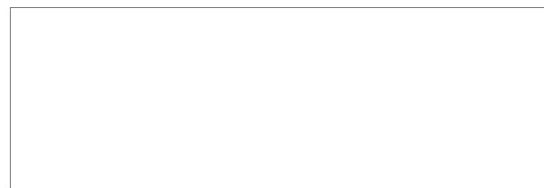


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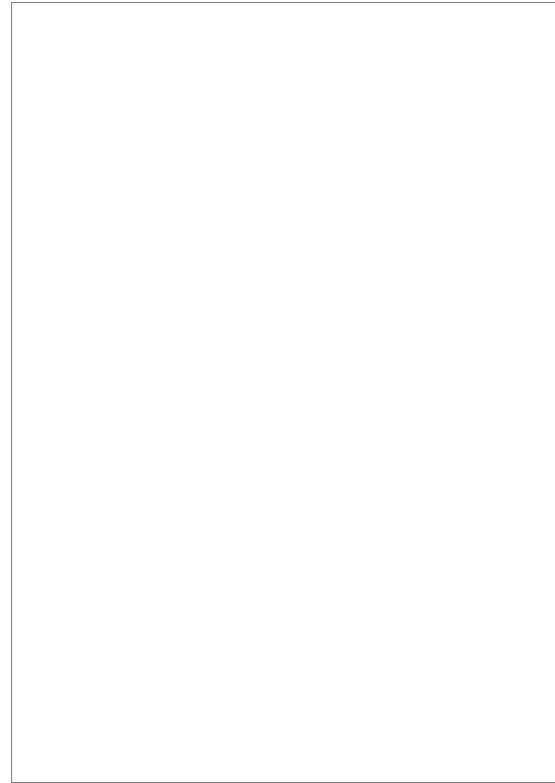
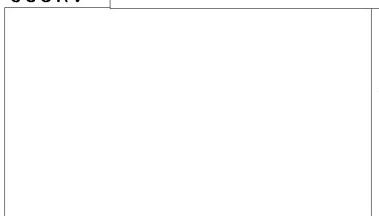
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USSR: [redacted]



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NOTES

Romanian party secretary for foreign affairs Stefan Andrei, who will arrive in the US on Sunday for a visit of about ten days, has told US diplomats that President Ceausescu wants him to seek your views on "one or two issues of major interest."



Andrei almost certainly will want to talk about Soviet-Romanian relations, including what the Romanians consider to be a Soviet ideological-historical attack that questions--and thereby threatens--the legitimacy of the Romanian nation and its rights to its present territory. Since some Romanians fear that Moscow will try to sabotage the Helsinki follow-on conference scheduled for Belgrade next year, Andrei may outline Romania's plans to press for guarantees safeguarding its independence and sovereignty.

Andrei, age 45, is the youngest member of the party's Political Executive Committee and is second only to Ceausescu in the formulation of Romania's delicately balanced foreign policy.

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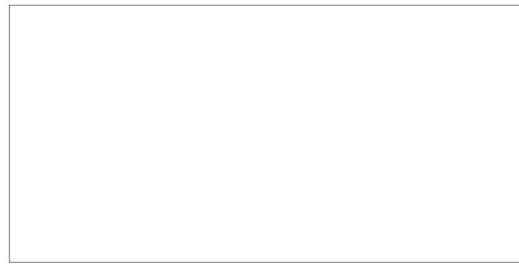
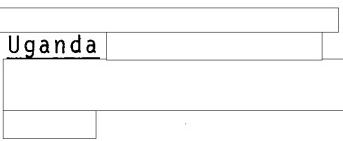
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Uganda



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A contingent of Cuban troops arrived in Havana from Angola on Wednesday, according to a Yugoslav press report. Although Havana has not officially confirmed the report, it probably is accurate.

The troops could have come from the convoy that arrived on the same day in Mariel, just west of Havana. The number of troops was not given.

One ship in the convoy has made several trips to Angola as a troop carrier and can accommodate about 700 men. The convoy probably consisted of only one or two other ships, each of which could carry from 400 to 700 men.

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CUBA-ANGOLA

The talk that has been emanating from Havana since late April about plans for a withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola has several aims. It is intended to:

- Meet Soviet concerns.
- Check international criticism of Cuba's military intervention.
- Deflate Angola as an excuse for direct US retaliation against Cuba.
- Undercut the justification for any criticism of Cuba at the meeting of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States.
- Smooth the way for a resolution approving Cuba's role in Angola at the non-aligned summit in Sri Lanka in August.
- Reverse the unfavorable trend in Cuba's bilateral relations with countries in Western Europe, Japan, and Latin America.

Havana has deliberately left vague the nature of the planned withdrawal in order to retain as many options as possible while gaining maximum propaganda advantage.

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The Cubans can be expected to keep details of the withdrawals as obscure as possible. President Doricos, for example, has told foreign journalists that Havana will not permit the withdrawal to be monitored. He said he expects Cuban statements on the subject to be taken at face value.

At the same time, Havana appears concerned that its position might be misrepresented and that world public opinion might then be led to expect more than the Cubans intend to deliver. This probably explains why Fidel Castro chose to address the issue publicly on Sunday, once the contents of his message to Swedish Prime Minister Palme were released to the media.

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Castro said that a withdrawal had begun in accordance with a plan worked out with the Angolan government, but he gave no specifics and strongly underscored the long-term nature of the program. There was no corresponding announcement from Luanda, suggesting that the Cuban force reduction was not universally popular in official circles there.

The Size of the Cuban Presence

US estimates of the Cuban presence in Angola have stood at 13,000 to 15,000--mostly military--for several months. They were computed without benefit of continuous, comprehensive information during the buildup, particularly with regard to the number of troops arriving by ship.

Havana may have decided that substantial and continuous withdrawals at present are out of the question, especially in light of the recent increase in guerrilla warfare in several areas of Angola. By inflating the figure for the Cuban presence far beyond the US estimates, the Cubans could claim to be pulling men out for months without changing the composition of their actual forces and thus reducing their capability to secure the countryside and maintain order.

The Cubans have in fact been spreading the word that the US estimates are too low. Early this month, Fidel Castro gave some visiting diplomats the impression that the true figure is about 20,000, stating that the US estimates were about 8,000 too low.

Troops Sent Home

Some troops have already left Angola. According to Castro, some 100 Interior Ministry troops thrown into battle in early November were present during his speech on Sunday. He indicated, however, that they had been replaced by others from the same ministry. This type of rotation has probably been typical since early this year. As Castro was speaking, a convoy of Cuban merchant ships, including at least one known troop carrier, was moving toward Cuba.

Even if the 20,000 figure is accurate, several thousand Cubans could probably be shipped home without seriously weakening President Neto's regime. The bulk of the fighting is over, and resistance has

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been reduced to sporadic--but persistent--guerrilla warfare. The Cubans probably believe that Angolan units, with strong Cuban leadership and technical support, can eventually eliminate the guerrillas. In any event, Havana probably wants its troops withdrawn from combat as much as possible in order to reduce casualties--a source of some discontent at home.

While shipping some troops home, Havana will probably try to give the impression of even greater withdrawals by resorting to subterfuges, such as those suggested by various diplomats in Havana. Several hundred military personnel could be dispersed among other African countries without attracting undue attention, and there is evidence that this is already being done.

[redacted] Cuban military advisers from Angola arrived in Equatorial Guinea in April to help train local forces. Moreover, some of the Cuban military advisers sent to Mozambique this year to assist the Mozambican armed forces and to help train Mozambique-based Rhodesian guerrillas almost certainly came from Angola.

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[redacted] almost all of the 30 Cuban military advisers in Sierra Leone had come from Angola. In addition,

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[redacted] Cuban forces from Angola had recently replaced most of the local military units on Guinea-Bissau's border with Senegal, but there is no information to confirm or support this report.

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The transfer of Cubans in Angola from military to civilian status also could distort the nature of the withdrawal. A large portion of the Cuban military personnel in Angola are reservists. Many of them could be demobilized in place, continuing their military duties as civilians. They also could be re-mobilized on very short notice should the situation in Angola require it.

The Czechoslovak ambassador in Havana stated in late May that perhaps as many as 3,000 Cubans now engaged in support tasks in Angola were demobilized military personnel.

These devices give the Cubans the opportunity to claim plausibly that they are adhering to their pledge to reduce their military presence and at the

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same time keep the Angolan veterans handy in the event they are needed again in Angola or elsewhere in Africa. The men chosen for such reassessments, however, probably would be military advisers and technicians.

The Soviet Angle

The withdrawal gambit largely appears to have been a product of Soviet urging. Moscow has become increasingly concerned about the negative impact of Cuban-Soviet activity in Angola and elsewhere in southern Africa on the USSR's relations with the US.

This reportedly was a subject of discussions when Castro, his top foreign affairs official, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, and his chief adviser for African policy were in Moscow in late February and early March for the Soviets' 25th party congress. Rodriguez has made three additional trips to Moscow since then, presumably in part to iron out differences on Angola.

Cuban Armed Forces Minister Raul Castro evidently went to Angola on April 20 to conduct a personal review of the situation with his field commanders and then went on to Moscow to attend the funeral of Marshal Grechko. After meeting with Brezhnev on May 5, Raul dropped out of sight. He may have been in Moscow later in May when high-ranking delegations from Mozambique and Angola were there.

Raul reportedly reappeared in Angola in early June and then went to Congo and Guinea before returning home.

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Staying On

A very large force of Cuban military advisers and technicians will be needed indefinitely to develop the basis for a professional military establishment and to acquaint the Angolans with the equipment they have inherited. At some point, the Cubans may ask other African countries to offset with their own troops whatever reduction the Cubans are making in their residual force.

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Even should assistance be forthcoming from other African countries, the Cubans have no illusions about the ability of the Popular Movement to survive a rapid withdrawal of Cuban military personnel from Angola. Havana has no intention of wasting through a precipitate withdrawal the sacrifice it has already made in Angola and will maintain a substantial military presence there for at least the next year.

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